

(2.)

THOUGHTS
ON THE^K
LOVE
OF
GOD.

PHIL. I. 9, 10.

*And this I pray, that your Love may
abound yet more and more in Know-
ledge, and in all Judgment; That ye
may approve Things that are excellent;
That ye may be sincere, and without
Offence till the Day of Christ.*

L O N D O N :

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PREFACE.

THE main Argument of these Papers is, that of our Love to God, and Jesus. Our salvation depends on the Attainment of it, and our Peace, and Comfort, on knowing we possess it. To tell of the Love of God and Christ to sinners, is a noble Subject for the Tongue of an Angel, but too sublime for the Pen of a poor Mortal, tho' infinitely indebted to it, because it surpasses Knowledge. We have lively Descriptions of Heaven's joy, and Hell's misery from God himself, but till we ascend the Heights of Glory, and peep into the fiery Lake beneath, we can't nearly know the height, and depth, of that Love, which drag'd us out of that Abyss, and rais'd us so very high. We shall then call on the Seraphims to sing in Consort with us, the praises of God, and the Lamb, and think all too little, to express our Gratitude for their boundless Love.

I dare not enterprize this Task, but only attempt to shew that our Love to God principally consists in the prevailing esteem and value we have for him in our Judgments, and not so much in the Movements of the Affections, tho' they

The PREFACE.

they are very desireable, when bottom'd on what is more substantial. I feel not that warmth I cou'd wish, to the Truths I write, tho' the Theme be the moving Passion of Love; yet I highly prize them. I find myself pleas'd, when I think I may please others, by what I say, but in my Judgment, I hope, I had rather please God, than the whole World. These weaknesses will hang about us, these corrupt Touches will more or less tarnish our best Actions, till the Soul be drawn out of this rusty Sheath. True Christian Joy is the Life of our Lives, the very Soul of all Enjoyments: For what has that Man to fear, who knows he has God for his Friend? But still natural Temper, a pensive Indisposition, Age, Weakness, or Temptation, may over-cast these bright happy Days: If then we han't Recourse to something more solid and abiding, our Hope will be languishing, and failing.

Don't suffer me, I beseech thee, dear Lord to light others in my Intention, and to lose my way myself. Be pleas'd graciously to Seal saving Instruction on my Soul, to Engrave the Name and Love of Jesus, deeply, and indelibly on my Heart, or 'twill remain as the barren Heath. Accept of my hearty Endeavours, to glorify thee by doing good to others. Let thy Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, appear in my frailty and weakness, to crown all with Success, merely for the Sake and Honour of thy most blessed Son Christ Jesus my Lord. Amen.

THOUGHT



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THOUGHTS

ON THE

Love of GOD.

I.

WHILE Men live at ease
in Prosperity, they gene-
rally have few, and feeble
Thoughts of God, and Re-
ligion. Some grow gradually pro-
phane and vicious, till they appear
B openly

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openly scandalous. Others more civiliz'd, demure, and sober, take up Principles rather from the force of Education and Example, than from deep consideration, and serious reading the Holy Scriptures, so their whole Profession frequently degenerates into meer formality. It's a sad sight, to behold many renouncing openly Religion, and all hopes of Heaven; and still more professing it with apparent danger of losing their labour. In this Class, the Almost-Christian seems most to be pitied since coming very near so massy a Treasure of happiness, and yet dropping short of it, that very circumstance will finally render his case most deplorable, and out of measure vexatious. Lord grant it may never be my dreadful fate, for sweet Jesus sake. Libertines are self-condemning when they give themselves time to think, while the conceited Pharisee hugs himself to death in a Fit of self-admiration, our Lord assuring us that Publicans sooner get to Heaven than such affected Wretches. Conscience sometimes may awaken a Sinner, but when it's thoroughly do-

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with strong Delusions of Hipocrisie, nothing short of a Miracle can rouse it; for the Devil himself can scarce know himself, while wrapt in *Samuel's* Mantle. God warn'd the *Jews* of these fond conceits by his Prophets, and very early declar'd by one of the greatest of them, *That Obedience was better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of Rams*, 1 Sam. 15. 22. When they grew stubborn and wicked, he declar'd he abhor'd their *Offerings* and *Services*, tho' they were his own Institution, *Isai.* 1. Our Blessed Saviour assur'd them, tho' they were the Seed of *Abraham*, it wou'd not profit them, unless they did his Works. The Pharisees gave Alms, pray'd, and fasted, and were very exact in most of the exterior of Religion; yet he utter'd many Woes against them. Nay, some who preach'd him, and did *Miracles* in his Name, even these he declar'd he wou'd disown at the Day of Judgment, *Matt.* 7. 22, 23. *Judas* was of the best Church and purest Society that ever was on Earth, and yet remain'd a Son of perdition. The means and helps he had, while per-

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verted by his Insincerity, tho' the best that cou'd be, turn'd but to his greater Condemnation. What shameful folly then must that Man be guilty of, who dare presume of any thing of this nature? Yet multitudes, God knows, have nothing better to shew for all their future blessed hopes, yet still are so stupid as to glory in them. Till these strong Holds of Satan in the Soul are dismantled, it can have no true comfort, nor safety. Let that thought scare all out of that scandalous, fond Doteage, that they run not into the Pit with their Eyes open.

II.

Of what infinite Importance is it to us all, therefore, closely to consider, what we may depend upon in this immense Concern of the Soul, of more worth than a World, in his Valuation, who redeem'd it at a price that wou'd purchase many Worlds, and bankrupt all their Treasures to pay the least part of it. His Word then must be our only safe and sure Guide in this important Affair, that Words can't express, nor Thoughts fully comprehend. O val

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Eternity, how dost thou astonish our Minds, swallow up our Thoughts, and out-stretch all Imagination! Eternal Life and Death are Things too big to lie long in the Mind without amazing its Faculties: But wou'd we, now and then, seriously revolve such Subjects in our Thoughts, they wou'd prove of mighty force, to lift us above the sinful Delights, and Cares of this poor perishing Life, and attach our Souls more effectually to God and his Service. Let us then reflect on what Christ and his Apostles declare of these weighty Matters: Then let us impartially consider, whether we stick fast to their Terms and Counsels, or adhere to vain, idle Conceits of our own, so rush upon irreparable Ruine.

III.

The Scriptures declare a state of Nature, a state of Wrath and Condemnation, a state of Unbelief, Pride, Ignorance, and Enmity to God, and his Laws, in short, a state of Vassalage to Sin and Satan: The Mind dark, the Heart impure, the Will and Affections corrupt, the Life and Conversation vain and wicked, like muddy streams issuing from a polluted

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Fountain. They tell us, we derive this miserable Condition from the Fall of *Adam*, a most wretched Inheritance! That our Recovery is by *Jesus Christ*, the second *Adam*, the Lord from Heaven: That he is much more able to save, than the other was to destroy, and the remedy he brought, was much stronger, than the poison convey'd, as is most elegantly and emphatically express'd, *Rom. 5*. They assure us, that our state in *Christ*, is a state of Grace, Peace, and Salvation, that there is *no Condemnation* to them *who are in Christ Jesus*, *Rom. 8*. And that there is no safety out of him: That it's a state of Purity, and Usefulness, one main branch of that Attainment consisting in a good degree of conquest of carnal self and the World. This happy state is variously describ'd by different Expressions, all tending to the same Purport, and centring in the same Event. It's call'd a *new Birth*, the *new Creature*, a *new Nature*, a *partaker of the divine Nature*. In consequence of this, they are stiled the *Saints*, the *faithful*, the *adopted Sons of God*, his *Heirs*, and *joynt-Heirs with Christ*. In fine, *Old*

Things

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Things are past away, and all Things are become new, to their expressible advantage, and blessed condition. These Scriptural Phrases so frequently occur, that 'twou'd be endless to refer to them. They bespeak a very strange and signal Change, such as none but the mighty Power of God can effect, even the exceeding greatness of his Power, according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ, when he rais'd him from the dead, Eph. 1. 19, 20. These Expressions challenge our most serious consideration: To pass them by slightly, to pervert them, or not to lay that due stress upon them God demands, must be to the apparent hazard of the Soul.

IV.

This mighty Power of God, in a saving Conversion of the Soul from the Power of Sin, is all along in Scripture attributed to the immediate Agency of the Holy Spirit. To him is ascrib'd the conviction of Sin, the discovery of our miserable state by Nature, and recovery by Christ, who, by the light of God's Word, brings this light into a dark, benighted Soul. His Inhabitation gives us a right to

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Christ, and freedom from condemnation, for such as *have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his*. He is declar'd to be the Bond of Union between Christ and Believers: Therefore God is said to *dwell in them, and walk in them*, to own them as his Children, and himself their *Father*: Thus the very Bodies of the Saints become his *Temple*. This blessed Union is most significantly express'd by those in Nature, Art, and Affection, that are most vital, strong, and endearing. To the Vine, and the Branch; the Head, and the Body; the Foundation, and Superstructure; the Husband and Wife. Our blessed Lord describes the first at large, and plainly asserts the necessity of it: And for the rest, they frequently occur throughout St. *Paul's* and St. *Peter's* Epistles. This Union is the Basis of Communion with God, for thus we are in Christ, in the Apostle's Phrase; and to such as are out of them, God is a *consuming Fire*. Thus our Persons and Services became acceptable to God. Thus more immediately the Holy Spirit is the Author of all good to the Soul, breathing into it the spiritual Life, maintaining

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taining it against all the united force of Flesh, World, and Devil, carrying it on amidst all its Conflicts, with hope, and comfort to eternal Life, enabling it to *mortifie* Corruptions, to vanquish Temptations, and triumph over Death, and all its Terrours, *Rom. 8.* What an impregnable Fort of safety against all Opposition and Danger is this most mighty Assistant! What an All-sufficient Treasury of Peace and Comfort, does this sacred Inhabitant bring into that happy Soul that receives him! May we all ever be ambitious of his Residence, and sweet powerful Influences, and value the Attainment as our highest Privilege and Honour. Let us read and meditate to increase the flame of desire after him, and incessantly pray to the Father of Mercies, for this *Spirit of Promise*, looking constantly to *Jesus*, who has merited this divine Gift, and receiv'd him without measure, to impart Him to his, and employs his Intercession to the same kind purpose. When we feel his divine Contact, and Movements on the Soul, let us prize, and cherish them, with all Humility, and Alacrity, to improve

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our Devotion, and Obedience. Let us use caution; lest we grieve, quench, or resist him; of all neglect, or opposition to his kind Motions, least we dearly repent of our folly, when all Interchange between Heaven and us shall seem to fail. The Doctrines here related, are its true, mysterious, but great Truths, because reveal'd by God, who assures us they are of the last consequence to the peace and safety of our Souls, so challenge our most ponderous Thoughts: None but an Infidel, or a Trifler, can slightly pass over them. All the Embellishments of Art, or Nature, all Attainments, and proficiency in the School of moral Virtues, will stand us in little stead, unless christianiz'd, and consecrated to God by his Holy Spirit, by his Aids, and sacred Abode.

V.

We must seek after the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, if we desire to attain a comfortable persuasion of so great a Blessing, as is his Residence in our Souls. A royal Visit is a great condescension in a Prince, and an uncommon favour to a Subject, tho' a Friend and Courtier: But tho' Men

are

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are fond enough of these Honours, yet they bring charge and trouble with them. What Honour then do's the King of Kings confer on his Favourites, who not only now and then Visits them in an extraordinary manner, but indulges them with constant Residence, and keeps House, if I may so call it, all the time, at his own Expence, for their safety and refreshment! When God by his Holy Spirit takes possession of a Soul, he brings with him a Train of Blessings, many rich Gifts, and ample Provision: A whole Constellation of Graces begin to dawn and twinkle, till they break thro' Clouds, and Mists of Corruption, into a glorious Radiancy, that the happy Possessor may feel warming his Breast, and the World at length see shining in his Life. They are principally these: Repentance, Faith, Love, Resignation, Trust, Humility, Meekness, Patience. These are Jewels to adorn the Christian. Tho' one may appear more beautiful in different Persons, or the same at different Seasons, yet where one is, all are, some appearing more bright, others more languid, some in Miniature, others at full

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full Length, till time and Tryals give Brightness and Symmetry, and render all in their Turns conspicuous. Natural Temper, contracted Habits, good or bad, greater or lesser Temptations, make a wide difference between Man and Man, and even the very same Person, at various Seasons: Thus strangely influential are these, and other Circumstances of Life, on the best of Mortals here below: A few Instances may suffice. *Abraham*, so famed for his incomparable Faith, that by way of Eminence, he's stil'd, the Father of the faithful, we find under a cowardly Fit of prevarication: *Moses*, the Pattern of Meekness, transported with Passion: *Job*, the mirror of Patience, cursing the Day of his Birth. *David*, the Man after God's own Heart, we find floating in Tears, and breathing Sighs and Groans throughout his penitential Psalms; at another time we read how he was quite frozen up, stupid and hard to a wonder under crimson, and redoubled guilt, till God by the Prophet *Nathan* rous'd him. *Jonah* the Prophet, we find in a most unreasonable Pet with his Maker, expressive of strange insolence

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lence and cruelty, yet this very Man we find praying, and hoping even against hope, in the Belly of the very Whale. *Peter*, who trembled at the Voice of a Damsel, and abjur'd his Master, after his death, was as bold as a Lyon, and charg'd a Council to their Faces, with the guilt of his Blood. Some more nice than wise, have critically inquir'd, which is the first-born of the Soul, Faith, or Repentence. They acknowledge them to be Twins struggling for the light, in the same Womb, but in a Spirit of Curiosity are very busy, on both sides of the Question, to tie the scarlet Thread, to distinguish the Honour of Birth-right. A pious Soul, one wou'd think, shou'd be better pleas'd to find he possesses the Treasure, than to know which part came first, and will readily leave the dry Bone of contention to be toss'd about by such, who love talking of great Things, more than their Enjoyment.

VI.

This interior Work of the Spirit on the Soul of Man is the vital Spring of the spiritual Life, that sets all a going in the outward Conversation,
and

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and animates the Behaviour so universally, as to render Actions and Motions congruous, and regular in the Sight of Men, and acceptable to God, thro' Jesus Christ. What the Soul is to the Body, the same is the Holy Spirit to the Soul of a Christian; and Hypocrites mimick the Virtues of Saints, just as Puppets do the Movement of Men. They have no living Principle of Action within, but move as Art dictates, so what they do appears unnatural, and indecorous, till at last they flag, and quite neglect even outward Duties. Tho' for a while they may seem to Spectators to act some vital Parts of Religion, yet it's but the Play of some artful *Demon*, well skill'd in the mechanical Movements of Puppetry. The Pomp of outward Actions attract Gaze and Admiration, and most Men are apt to affect what gains Repute: But God looks principally at the Heart, and therefore the Christian keeps a vigilant Eye on his, that God may approve his Integrity. All the Gifts of Nature, and Grace, are free Boons from Heaven; but if any thing may be term'd our own with any Propriety,

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ty, 'tis that Integrity, and Truth in the inward Parts, by which we act purely for God's Glory. When the Jews, and the young Man in the Gospel, ask'd our Lord, *what they shou'd do to work the Works of God*, and *what good Thing he shou'd do*, that he might have eternal Life, Mat. 19. He points them to two inward masterly Principles, the *Love of God*, and *Faith* in himself, as the *Messiah*, and Saviour. It's true, our Lord insists upon his keeping the Commands, as the condition, and enumerates only second Table Duties, but the Love of our Neighbour being the Capital one, and the Soul, that animates all the rest he closes his Advice with that. Now the true Love of our Neighbour being the genuine effect of the Love of God, the main command of the first Table must be imply'd in the mentioning the chief of the first, for on these two hang all the Law, and the Prophets, Mat. 22. 40. by the determination of Christ himself. We see then how ready Men are to mind Actions more than Principles, which shou'd caution us against that mistake, and make us more careful of our Hearts,
for

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for as they are, such will be the Life; just as the *Tree* is to the *Fruit*, be it *good*, or *bad*, as our Lord makes the Comparison. The superstitious Scribe, bred up in the Bigottry of Rituals, was forc'd to own, tho' willing to justify himself, that a Samaritan, he hated, who express'd Compassion, and Offices of Love, to one wounded by Thieves, approv'd himself a better Neighbour, than the *Jewish* Priest and Levite, who pass'd by him, without help or pity. Nay, he asserts gallantly to our Lord, that to *Love God with all the Heart*, and to *Love our Neighbour as ourselves*, is *more than all whole-burnt Offerings and Sacrifices*, Mar. 12. 33. Let us take care he don't rise up in Judgment against us one Day, who have better light, and helps to see, and comply with such excellent Truths, and cardinal Duties.

VII.

While Men's Hearts are devoid of these two grand Christian Principles, *The Love of God* and *Men*, the two great Idols, *The Love of Self* and the *World* prevail. These two are the main sources of all Impieties against God, and all Injustice towards Men.

True

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True right Self-Love is the Dictate of Nature, and very consistent with the Law of God, but while we remain in a state of Nature, we miserably mistake it, and take carnal-self for our true, and only Interest. This fundamental Errour hurries the Soul into eager Pursuits of the World at all Adventures, till it plunge itself into Abysses irrecoverably, without a miracle of Mercy. Self-Love is the main Tap-root of corrupt Nature ever since the Fall of Man, that feeds those large Branches of iniquity St. *John speaks of*: He in short reduces all our Temptations, and Dangers, to one or all of them, viz. *The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life,* 1 Joh. Ch. 2. These branches are laden with forbidden Fruit, and he who wou'd successfully lop them, must begin with the mortification of vicious Self-Love, or else the tempting Fruit will draw him into sinful Gratifications. The true method of eradicating this wretched Principle, is the getting the Love of God into the Heart, that expels it, as light does darkness. Thus and thus only we come to the right Love of ourselves, for in loving
God

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God above all, we rightly love ourselves, by loving our true and lasting happiness, and all Things in and for God. This is a hard Lesson to the Sons of *Adam*, and none but the renew'd Sons of God feelingly understand it.

X The Soul of Man is active, and will be busy about something, if it feed not upon the Kernel, it will be sure to play with the Shell. If our Thoughts and Affections don't find out God among his Creatures, and pitch upon Him as the main Object of their solace and delight, they'll strike deep into worldly Objects, and be bury'd alive in them. The Soul, while sheath'd in the Body, contracts a Rust from that enclosure, and the prevailing Objects of Sense, that obtrude themselves upon it, from every Quarter. If we draw it not out of this confinement, and exercise it, by abstracted Thoughts, that elevate it above the Horizon of Sense, 'twill stick fast, and become one Piece with the rusty Scabbard. God warns us faithfully of the danger we are in from the Allurements of the World, and strictly commands us *not to Love it*,

nor

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nor the Things of it, Jam. 4. 4. Because it's his Rival for our Hearts, and Enmity to God. When we dally with the Temptation in any kind, we are then making haste to ensnare ourselves. If we will be sporting with the Glories, and Beauties of it, and flutter about them, as the Moth does about the Candle, if we perish not in the flame, yet we shall be sure to singe our wings, and hinder our flight above.

VIII.

The Love of God is that Fountain of Life, that feeds all the pure Streams of Piety towards God, and Beneficence to Men. Were this divine Principle in all Men's Hearts, we shou'd recover the State of Paradise, even a Heaven upon Earth. Where its real Presence is in a renew'd Soul, how does it transpoze the Life, and transport the Man beyond himself! What is it he can't do, and suffer out of Love to God and Christ? This sacred Fire animated the Breasts of the glorious Company of Martyrs and Confessors, that cloud of Witnesses to the Truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus they conflicted undauntedly with the
Flames,

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Flames, wild Beasts, Racks, Dungeons, Gallies, Death, and Misery, in all their terrible Forms, both quick and violent, long and lingering. Thus they took *joyfully the spoiling of their Goods*, and accounted themselves happy, and a great Honour done them, when they might suffer for Christ. Acts of Self-denial, and a generous contempt of the World, no doubt, preceded, or they had been as unfit, as unable, thus cheerfully to offer themselves a Sacrifice to God. The Love of Jesus had so possess'd them, that Self-denial, as it were, had lost its Name and Nature: They were crucified to the World, and the World to them. How are our soft, and effeminate Lives the Reverse of all this! **How** does our too great Love of **the World** tell us, we are very unfit for the fiery Tryal.

This divine flame enkindled another to their Brethren-for the sake of Jesus, and in respect to his dying Command, who breath'd Love to the last Gasps. Then is our Love right to God, when it terminates in our Brother, and then right to our Brother, when it flows primitively from the Love of God: According to that sure
and

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and reciprocal Mark given us by St. John, 1 Joh. 5. 1, 2. All pretences to Love without this Reciprocation are spurious, and deceitful. Divine Love in these heroic Champions of the Christian Faith, from the Example, Command and Image of Christ, they saw in the Souls of their Brethren, made them heartily sympathize with them in their Distresses, joyfully relieve their Necessities, cordially pray for their Succour, and be ready to *lay down their Lives* for them. Good God, what heavenly Souls were these! Their Hearts were like a Burning-glass, to unite Rays from the *Sun of Righteousness*, to raise a flame within, that burst forth in a meridian Splendour in the Life. Lord Jesu, what frozen, and benighted Souls have we, compared with these Sons of the Morning in primitive Times! Our Lot seems fallen in the very dregs of Time, while we feel so little of Love to God, or one another. Our selfish Principles make us forget our best Interest: And the God of this World has so dazled our Eyes with its Glories, that we can scarce discern
any

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any Beauty, but in the Landships of his Temptations.

IX.

Thus we have seen how monstrous a Vice sinful Self-Love is, how productive of all wickedness, the very Root of Apostacy from God and Goodness: How naturally its carnal Appetites and Lusts feed on the Things of this World, and how difficult it is to change this corrupt Byass. We have seen likewise how the counter Principle, the Love of God, is the Soul's Recovery and Health, and how naturally it discharges itself into the Love of our Brother, and the happy Consequents thereof. Let us then be perswaded to keep a vigilant Eye on our greatest danger, to prevent it, and our main Duty, and Safety, to comply, and attain it. While Men live in Unbelief, they will live under the Power of Self-Love. *Hobbs's* Faith will continue us in the State of Nature, which he calls a State of War, of Horn and Hoof, like wild Beasts, to kick, and push one another, and to Sacrifice every Thing to the grand Idol, Self-Interest: A hellish State, full of Misery and Confusion! True Faith

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is the first step out of this forlorn Condition, till divine Love gives wings quite to escape it. Tho' Faith is the first Born of the Soul, and very excellent, and valuable, as the Root of all Grace in the Heart of a Christian, yet the sacred Oracles give the preheminance to the younger Brother, Charity, as it assimilates us to God, who *is Love*, and he who *dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him*, 1 Cor. Ch. 13. Its dignity is farther declar'd, in that it *never fails*, as other Graces do. Tho' thus Charity has the preference, yet Faith has the Honour to feed and invigorate the flame of Love, till Vision brings us to fruition, and Faith expires with our last Breath. Then we shall peep no longer thro' the Chinks of our Mudwalls, nor *see darkly thro' the Glass* of God's Word and Works, but *Face to Face*: *Now we know in part, then shall we know even as we are known*. O bless'd, bright, and eternal Day! fit me for it, dear Lord, then let it haste away: So shall the shades of this Night of Sorrow and Temptation vanish; then shall my poor Soul suffer no more dismal Eclipses of the Sun of Righteousness,

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ness, that my Sins and Follies too often create me here, but live, and bask in the light and comfort of thy glorious, beautifying Rays, where there shall never happen a Sun-set more.
Amen.

X.

'Tis not easy to quit this delicious Subject, since the very Contemplation of it gives the Soul a heavenly Complexion, and makes it share a little in the Bliss of Angels, and glorify'd Saints. These Thoughts chase the Soul, and blow up the Holy Fire within, till it blaze forth at the Lips, in Songs of Praise to the God of Love; and thus we after our poor manner, faintly Eccho back the heavenly Anthems of the Blessed above. This divine Theam is as profitable as pleasant, of the last Importance to gain and improve it: A failure here, is mortal, and makes our Case desperate, till it be alter'd: It highly concerns us then to enquire into the Nature, and Properties of divine Love, and to feel the Pulse of our own Souls, the better to know how we stand affected to it, what we possess of it, and what we farther seek, and desire

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of so noble an Attainment. A spiritual frame of so heavenly a Nature, is not easily got, may soon be lost, and is with greater difficulty still recover'd. We have great Reason to look to it, that we do not fail of this Grace of God, since many deceive themselves in the Enquiry. There are such Deceits in our Hearts, and so many ensnaring Objects about us, ever ready to quench the sacred Flame, and when it's beat down, ever to trample out the last spark, that it's very difficult to raise our Souls aloft, or keep them there long. It's true, all the means of Grace are calculated to this purpose, and have a powerful Tendency to blow the Coals of Love, but carnal Self-Love is so prevalent in most Men, and so apt to encroach upon the best, that we often mistake our true Interest. This spreads its Leven so much thro' our Constitution, and seems so much of a piece with our real selves, that we often take our Enemy for our Friend. We stand too near ourselves, to see ourselves distinctly, tho' we are too Eagle-ey'd to spy Faults Abroad. The Eye that sees every Thing, can't see
C itself,

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itself, but by Reflection; and we so seldom reflect upon ourselves, to bring our Hearts to the Test, that when we wou'd, we scarce can do it, to any good purpose. The Soul is not only immured in the Body, but environ'd with a Multitude of corporeal Objects, that sollicit the Senses, and they again tease the Soul to consent to their Embraces. Thus poor Mortals are tempted to sit down in the Lap of Pleasure, till they suffer the Locks of their spiritual Strength and Purity to be clipt, by every wanton Hand, and themselves become the Sport of their Seducers. May these Considerations teach us Caution, in keeping our Hearts, and searching them, after the Love of God.

XI.

Some think the Love of God consists in a great Flow of Affections, in Raptures, and extatic Motions, while meer Enthusiasts pretend to nothing more. 'Tis dangerous to make that a Criterion, or Rule of judging of our State, that is common to Deceivers, and lies level with the gross Mimicry of Religion. Torrents are but shallow, tho' they run swift and noisy while

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while deep Streams move soft and flow. Evil Spirits are unquiet in their Walks, and hurry in their Movements: God comes not in the Whirlwind, but the *soft still Voice*, he owns as his. Human Passions and Affections depend much on Constitutions, almost as various, as are Men's Faces. Nay, so variable is poor Man, as to these Circumstances, that a few Misfortunes, or a Distemper, shall alter so much his natural Temper, as to make him differ widely, even from himself. As the Moon therefore regulates the Ebbs and Flows of the Tide, so do these Accidents and Temperaments influence very variously the Rise and Fall of Men's Passions and Affections, only with less regularity and certainty. Much of this depends upon mechanic Powers, the animal Oeconomy, the circulation of the Blood and Spirits, in conjunction with outward Occasions. Some Persons will weep till they sob, at a Tragedy; others again will be more affected with a Romance, than with real History. There's another sort of People in the World who seem almost immoveable, at all real, and phanta-

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stic Appearances; their Tempers are steady, from a Greatness of Mind, or a robust Constitution. These even Dispositions are not much elated with Mirth, or deprest with Sorrow, and when either extream touches them inwardly, they rarely express it outwardly, but set the weeping and laughing Philosophers both at Defiance. Since Matters stand thus, that some like *April*, are Sun-shine and Showers all the Year round; nay, sometimes can, as it were, cry, and laugh in a Breath; and the Expressions of the Passions in others seem always frozen up, what rational dependance can we have upon such uncertain Movements, especially in so weighty a Cause as that of the good or bad State of the Soul.

XII.

Christ has given us more solid Proofs of the Sincerity of our Affection to God, and Him, than have yet been nam'd; and if we ground our Confidence upon them, will never deceive us. They are such Marks as will plainly distinguish the Faithful from all Sorts of Pretenders whatever. The true Love of God is ever founded in
a high,

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a high, prevailing Esteem, and Valuation of Him. Judgment must proceed the closure of the Will, or it can't make a wise and stedfast choice. Without this firm Foundation, all the Flutter of the Affections are very precarious, and may easily deceive us. Affections are the effect of the Will long bent one way, resting with complacency on some particular Object. This is the Root of all Habits both bad and good: The former are stormy, violent, and impetuous, the latter, when appropriated to Religion, are the gentle, easy, habitual Inclinations of the Will, and are justly styled, divine Affections. Sense, Lust, and carnal Appetite begin, and confirm the first, and Reason, sanctified by Religion, commence and compleat the last. The experienc'd Christian, who has felt the Tyranny of his Lusts, and what it is to *partake of the divine Nature*, will readily take my meaning, and easily distinguish between the feverish heat of corrupt Nature, and the gentle, benign warmth of a renew'd Mind. I wou'd not be mistaken by any Thing said on this Topic, as if I question'd the reality, or

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depreciated the Excellency of affectionate Movements, and divine Raptures; no, they have been, and are undoubtedly the Portion of pious Souls on some Occasions, tho' rarely: All I intend, in short, is this, that these alone are not to be confided in, unless in Conjunction with other more solid Grounds, that either preceed, attend, or follow them: Then safe and happy are they, who partake of these utterable Favours, and enjoy so much of Heaven before they possess it,

Now let us lay our Hands on our Hearts, and impartially endeavour to feel their Pulse, whether they beat more strongly for God, or the World? After mature deliberation, do we find that in our Judgments we prefer him above every Thing? Is he All-sufficient in our Opinion, and Estimation? Do we close with him as our Portion, and is our rest and complacency chiefly in Him? Is Christ pretious in our View, and do we value Him indeed as the Pearl of great Price? Is the Interest of our Souls, that we have mainly at Heart, and when they grow in Grace, Peace and Hope,

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Hope, are we pleas'd, let the World go how it will? Are these Things accounted our chief Treasure, and does the main Current of our Hopes and Fears run in this Channel? Can we bear Losses and Crosses without despondency, and ne'er think ourselves quite undone, till God and Christ are gone? Had we rather suffer, than Sin, and let the Flesh be pinch'd, and torn, rather than wound our Consciences, and part with Life itself, when the saving of it wou'd apparently hazard our Salvation? If this be the Temper of our Spirits in a prevailing Sense, on serious Reflection, as far as at present we can be Masters of our own Determinations, and carry our Thoughts and Resolutions, we may safely conclude we have got Possession of that incomparable Jewel, the Love of God, and Jesus.

It's true, we can't ordinarily bring these Resolves to the Tryal, and some of them, it may be, never. God do's not exercise all his Children alike, and calls but few of them to Martyrdom, yet he gives them all to will his Pleasure, on these supposals, and Power to act accordingly on real Occasions.

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If therefore we ordinarily govern ourselves by these Principles in the course of our Lives, tho' with many failures, we may hope for extraordinary Assistances upon great Emergencies: and in the mean time may comfortably reflect on the kindly symptoms of our Sincerity. This is a solid Building on a Rock, that will stand the Test of a Storm, while Transports, and soaring Notions, may leave their Admirers Foundation on the Sand, to be the Sport of Winds and Waves. Christ, who advises us not to put new Wine into old Bottles, will not crush with his Cross, the back of a young or weak Convert, but will adjust its weight to their Strength. Yet some Cross he will have all his to bear, and bids them expect it, peremptorily declaring they *can't* otherwise be his *Disciples*, Luk. Ch. 14. He advises them therefore to sit down and consider the *Cost*, and weigh the Charges, under the Figure of Building a *Tower*. He expressly there tells them, they must *hate* their nearest Relatives, and their own *Lives*, otherwise upon no Terms can they lay claim to him. The Law of Nature, as well as the divine Commands,

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mands, allow, nay, require us to love our own Lives and nearest Relations, our Lord therefore wou'd ne'er make our Duty clash with these. His meaning then is plainly this, when any, or all of these Interests come in competition with His, we must abandon them all, as if we hated them, and cleave to him alone. He then concludes thus, *Whoever he be of them, that forsaketh not all that he has, he can't be my Disciple.* This Renunciation was not to be actual, and immediate, any farther than in design and resolution, till a proper Season offer'd. 'Twill be our wisdom to pursue the same Method with ourselves, Christ took with his, and recommends to us. Self-denial strikes immediately at Self-love, diametrically opposite to the Love of God, therefore our Saviour makes it his first, and great Lesson. This is doing Violence to corrupt Nature, and undoing, as it were, Carnal-self, to please and Honour God, a Sacrifice most acceptable to Him. We see then the Rules above prescrib'd, for judging of our State, are back'd by Christ's Authority, therefore most safe, and sure. Let us measure then

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our Love to God, by the Esteem and Value we have for him above all Things, and not by the uncertain Sallies of pathetic Movements. A Man may feel a stronger Beat of his Affections towards his House, Gardens, or Park, than towards all his other Tenements, and large demesns, that furnish Supplies, to keep all these in Order. Nay, it may be he shall be more sensibly tickled and pleas'd with a Horse or a Dog, than with all his Bags, Bonds, and Securities. But it must be at a strange expence of his folly, if he shou'd esteem any, or all of these, above his Patrimony. Nor will any Man in his wits presume, such a one prefers in his Judgment, and Choice, such Trifles, before such Treasures. Let us take Care we don't deceive ourselves by placing Religion and the Love of God in the lower and more sensitive part of the Soul, in sudden Heats and Flights, and by a Spirit of infatuation, neglect those Evidences, that are our best Title to our everlasting Inheritance. *Herod* fear'd *John*, heard him gladly, observ'd him, and did many Things, and after all, murder'd him. Here were the Move-

ments

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ments of the Passions, nay, some good Actions, yet he remain'd a vile Murderer, and an Adulterer. The Doctrine of the Cross, and forsaking all for Christ, so often inculcated, depends on a fix'd Resolution, not on the float of Affections. The stony Ground receiv'd the Word with Joy, but all came to nothing. The forward Youth, who so warmly accosted our Lord, in his pursuit of Heaven, went away as sorrowful, and lost it, for preferring Riches before it. Here the Passions play'd their Parts vigorously, but carnal Choice made the fatal Decision. Let not God's Children then yield to pensive dejection, for want of warm feeling of Affections, while better Symptoms abide: For they too often frighten themselves, as running Sheep do, merely with the Clatter of their own Feet. *St. Paul* prays for the *Philippians*, Ch. 1. 9. That their Love may abound more and more in Knowledge, and in all Judgment. We have no more Love of God, nor Hatred of Sin, than we have Light in the Understanding: Therefore in the next Verse, he intimates that we owe both our Sincerity and Perfection to it.

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it. To grow in Grace, is to grow in Knowledge, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18.

XIII.

What will it Profit us, if we weep for our Sins, if we don't forsake them? To talk of Jesus much, and feel now and then some flashes of Affection towards him, and yet refuse Obedience to him: Some weep plentifully, who don't mourn really, others mourn heartily, who can't shed a Tear. Some feel no glowings of Love within, nor the Light of God's Countenance, yet go on in a steady Course of Obedience. 'Tis better to Love God, tho' we don't know it, than to think we do, when there's nothing in it. Brave Souls are they, who, unassur'd of Heaven, renounce the World, and resolve to do their Duty, amidst all Discouragements, trusting in Jesus Christ to God's Promise of Mercy. Happy's the Man, who is contented with God's Allowance here, and hopes his Great and Good Self-will be his exceeding great Reward hereafter. 'Tis dangerous to trust to false Joys, or Sorrows: To mistake Moon-shine for Break of Day, and make Tears the Index of Repentance, without more Enquiry. Deep Sor-

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Sorrows astonish us sometimes, and so stupify Nature, as to stop up all Avenues of Relief that shou'd discharge the Passion. True spiritual Joys usually glide gently into the Soul, and make it calm, and sedate; boisterous Movements are more suspicious, since they rarely happen, but on singular Occasions. While the Springs and Wheels of a Clock are not rightly adjusted, there will be no regular Movement; if then we are govern'd by the Index on the Dyal-plate, we shall mistake the Hour of the Day. If there be not a solid, judicious Choice of God above every Thing, as a Principle presiding in the Soul, to govern the Motion of the Passions, they'll ebb and flow very uncertainly, upon every flight, as well as solemn Occasion, insomuch that we shall scarce ever be able to determine when we act as Men, and when as Christians: Whether from a truly gracious Disposition, or the mere Dictates of Nature.

XIV.

God forbid I shou'd so much as seem to say any Thing detracting from the Comforts of his Holy Spirit in the Hearts of the Faithful. The

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Consolations of the Almighty are not small: They are not only real, but great, so great, as to enable them perseveringly to conquer all Difficulties, and triumph over Death, in all its terrible Forms. I enter'd a Caveat against these supposals, and hope none will take Umbrage. Divine Favours are too good to be pass'd over in Silence: If we act so, we stand much in our own Light; and if we call them in question, we deny our own Mercies. When Pearls are cast before Swine, they may trample them under their Feet, but Saints will gather them up, and put them into their Bosoms. What God has promis'd, and pious Men of all Ages have experienc'd, will stand as an impregnable Rampart against all the Attacks of Infidels, and Contradiction of the Ungodly. No wonder *sensual Men, who have not the Spirit*, despise what they hate, and deny what they never felt: But the real Christian will sell all that he has, rather than not purchase this Field of Treasure.

XV.

Various are the Expressions of Scripture to this purpose, to create Expectation.

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pectation, and whet our Desires and Prayers, and if we don't read them often, believe, and seek them earnestly, we provoke God to leave us to walk in darkness. They are such as these. *The new Name : The white Stone : The hidden Manna of the Heart : The earnest of God's Spirit : His witnessing with our Spirits, that we are Children of God : The Spirit of Adoption to cry Abba Father : The abounding in Hope by the Power of the Holy Ghost : The full Assurance of Hope : Strong Consolations : The Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace.* These and many other Expressions of the like Nature assure us, that uncommon Joys and Comforts sometimes possess the Hearts of the Righteous. These are great and glorious Truths, and happy is the Soul entitled to them, tho' too many deceive themselves by false Claims. The common Enemy is very cunning, and we are too apt to consent to the Cheat. We are too ready to think well of ourselves, and take Matters at the first Rebound. Few will be perswaded to lay the Case to Heart, and use deep Consideration, and this neglect lays us open to Imposture. God ne'er design'd

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design'd we shou'd be at such a loss about these Matters; the deceits of our own Hearts give Life to our Doubts and Fears: Were we upright before him, and faithful to ourselves, he wou'd not suffer us to fall into a Spirit of Delusion. Our surest way therefore will be, to examine, how we got our Comforts, and to what End we improve them. If therefore they came after deep Humiliation, and we employ them to eradicate Sin more and more, to vanquish Lusts and Temptations, and delight in all religious Services, we may then happily conclude, what tends so directly to God, came from Him.

XVI.

God is said to *comfort* such as are *cast down*, to *heal* the *broken hearted*, to *revive* the *Spirit* of the *contrite* and *humble*, to give the *Oil of Joy* for *Mourning*. If now our Consolations come this way, we have the less reason to mistrust them, because they are agreeable to his Will and Promise. Nothing empties us more of Self-conceit, and the Love of the World, than sound Humiliation. When we lose these Relishes, divine Comforts
are

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are better entertain'd, for God will not bestow his Cordials upon such as slight them. Humbling work is not only necessary before Conversion, but after, for growth in Grace. Faith, and Love, the Root of all other Graces, improve under this Exercise. The more Vain this World appears, the more great, and real one, comes nearer in View. As we die to Sense and present Appearances, Faith gathers Strength, and lays faster hold of Things unseen: As Faith encreases, Love advances, and as we love God, he usually discovers his Affection to us: For our Love to God, is but the Reflection of his to us. *We love God, because he first loved us,* says St. John. Faith actuates Love, as is said before; but if that keep one Foot of the Compass in the Center, Love is the other to walk the Rounds, to draw and animate the whole Circle of Duty, both to God and Man. While direct Acts of Faith are multiply'd, the Habit is strengthened, and that again invigorates the Acts, till at length this happy Circulation brings the Soul to this sweet Conclusion, to take up its rest in Christ as its Portion and Happiness.

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piness. This is the safe, and sure way to attain a Sense of God's Love, that will not deceive us. Others raising a structure of sanguine Hopes, without this Foundation, expose themselves to sad and fatal Disappointments. The proper Work of Faith, if it act free, and strong, is, to appropriate Christ to the Soul, whence follows great Peace and Consolation. Raptures, and extatic sensations, seldom happen, and are of short Continuance, so are not the stated Meals of a Christian, but the spiritual Regale of a kind Master on special Occasions. *Rara hora, brevis mora*, says St. Bernard.

XVII.

When we improve our Comforts to mortify our Lusts, especially the Sin that so easily besets us, that folds so connaturally to our Constitution, and habitual Inclinations, then we may assure ourselves, they are not the Shadows of our own Fancies, nor the Effects of mechanical Causes, but the genuine Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These divine suavities are given us more for Profit, than Pleasure: This Sun-shine is afforded us to work by,

not

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not merely to sit down, and bask in its refreshing warmth. When our Zeal for God, and doing good, is blown into a Flame, by these encouraging Viaticums, they are certainly the Favours of an indulgent Father, and while we go on in a way of Duty, we may hope for their Continuance and Encrease, and now and then, some peculiar Coruscations of divine Love, to excite to nobler Enterprizes in our Christian course. The spring of such Consolation, must be above Nature, since it enables us to act quite Counter to its Propensities, and do Violence even to its most Passionate Desires. These are the sound Proofs of a true justifying Faith, long exercis'd in direct Acts, which finally terminate in those Acts that form a sweet and stated Assurance of God's Love to the Soul.

XVIII.

Again, if we employ heavenly Joys, to acquire more Strength and Agility in religious Services, we are upon a right Bottom. As the divine Nature prevails in us, pious and devout Actions become more connatural, and we perform them at Length, with
great

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great Facility and Pleasure. Thus we renew our Strength by waiting upon God; we walk in his Ways and are not weary, we run and are not faint: Then is the Joy of the Lord right, when it is our Strength, to advance in Piety. 'Tis a sad sign, when we pretend to strong Comforts, and yet remain under the Power of strong Corruptions: When the Love of this World apparently prevails in us, and we lay claim to spiritual Joys. This spectacle to the judicious, breeds a charitable Concern, like that we feel when we see a Malefactor go laughing to Execution. Nothing short of a surprizing Act of Grace, can rescue such out of the Power of their pleasant Phrensy, who hug their Chains, as if they were Strings of Pearls and Rubies. These People commonly are eaten up of a Party, and admire their Leaders as Oracles, and coldly, if at all, will receive Truths from any other Hand, tho' spiritual and important. They have *Men's Persons* more in *Admiration*, than the Honour of God, and his Truth, because they have made themselves their own Idols. A Child of Light will not reject a Truth, because sown by

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by a foul Hand: His God is his All, and any Thing from him is welcome, let who will be the Messenger; and because his Brother bears his Image, he loves him where ever he meets him. Such faithful Souls, shall never fatally err, and all their spiritual Delights here, are real Pledges of eternal ones hereafter.

XIX.

I might add, If joy and comfort flow in upon us, in a disconsolate suffering State, they come from him who *comforts such as are cast down*. If we suffer for the *Name of Christ*, happy are we, for the *Spirit of God and Glory rests upon us*. When the World looks pale upon us, our Enemies frown, and all about us appears dark, and dismal, then to rejoyce in God, as our Salvation, must be from a higher Principle, than any mortal is Master of. When Afflictions befall us from the Hand of God, mediate, or immediate, and we see it in them, and therefore humbly submit, and patiently bear the Cross, what spiritual Refreshments we then feel in these high Acts of Obedience, may be depended upon as divine Encouragements. Thus
Holy

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Holy *Job* saw the Hand of God in all his hard Tryals, tho' Men and Devils interven'd, and for this reason possess his Soul in Patience, and great Composure. The royal Prophet *David* discern'd the Finger of God, in that Volley of Curses *Shimei* pour'd upon him in the Hour of his Distress. If we can act at this sublime Rate in all our Sorrows, we shall Taste of their Consolations, and know them to be true, and genuine. The highest Honour in a suffering State, is that for Religion, when we are reproach'd, and Persecuted for Righteousness sake, and the discharge of a good Conscience. So many Promises of inward Joy are made to these Circumstances, that we can have no better Security given us, that they come from Heaven. These are some of those ways Saints receive divine Consolations, that may be depended on. No Devil in the Shape of an Angel of Light, can play his Tricks here. No bodily Temperaments, nor Enthusiastic Movements shall abuse an upright Soul, that seeks, or meets with Comforts in these Methods, tho' Hypocrites, who im-

pose

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pose upon others, finally deceive themselves.

XX.

We have seen in some measure the Excellency of true Christian Charity: How our Lord makes it, the summary of the Law and Prophets, and the Foundation of his own Institutes: What Preference St. *Paul* gives it above all other Gifts, and Graces, in so much that without it, all Attainments are in Vain. I endeavour'd to prove, that the Love of God, which was real, and lasting, was founded in solid Judgment, in a prevalent Esteem of him, in a Valuation, and Preference of an Interest in his Favours above all Things. As for the more sensible Display of the Affections, I hope I have not depreiated them, but recommended them upon a sound Basis, as great and glorious Encouragements to Religion, only with this Caution, that we be not drawn into fatal Mistakes, thro' Self-indulgence, and for want of serious Examining their Rise, and Tendency. I subjoin therefore the concurrent Advice of St. *Peter*, *Above all Things have fervent Charity.* What I shall add on this Occa-

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Occasion, shall be to excite to the use of the most proper Incentives to this Duty, to blow up this divine Flame, and to substract every Thing, as we are able, that has a Tendency to damp or quench it.

XXI.

The Christian's Life in Scripture is compar'd to a *Race* and a *Warsfare*, therefore we are bid to *throw off every weight* that incumbers us, and not to *intangle ourselves in the Affairs of this Life*. Impediments must be mov'd out of the way, to facilitate Expedition, and proper Motives are to be us'd to excite Alacrity in running. Love puts all our Powers in Motion, what therefore excites that, puts all in a forwardness. Whatever chills that noble Passion, clogs the Soul, and clips the wings of its Activity. Love animates us in our Conflicts against Temptation, and the Powers of Darkness; when that flags, we lose Christian Bravery. Whatever stifles that stops the very Vitals of Religion. As soon may the natural Life be maintain'd without Breathing, as the spiritual Life without Love.

One great Incentive, to beget, and improve the Love of God, is a strong, abiding Sense of his to us, in giving Christ to us. Sacramental Seasons therefore, where he is clearly exhibited to our Faith, and we approach the nearest to Heaven that we can while on Earth, are most proper Means to stir up this Flame. Since our Lord with *Desire, desir'd* to finish our Redemption, by his Passion, if we don't redouble our Desires after the Memorial, and its Benefits, we can't be exempted from the imputation of vile ingratitude to Jesus, and cruelty to our Souls. Rays of Light and Love more directly dart from the Sun of Righteousness thro' this Medium, that like a Burning-glass unites and transmits them to our Hearts, to raise seraphic Flames. And when we carry from God's Altar some of this sacred Fire, it puts a Lustre on our Countenances, making them shine with Peace and Joy, and puts a Vigour into our Lives, to Honour so gracious a Master.

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XXIII.

Previous or Consequent to this Celebration of the *Eucharist*, enter into deep Meditation of the Freedom of God's Love in giving Christ, while we neither sought, desir'd, nor deserv'd Relief: How resolutely our Saviour submitted to all that was dreadful, to deliver us from all evil imaginable. Read over all the Passages of his Sorrows and Sufferings carefully, and dwell seriously on those Thoughts; consider his Dignity, and the vile Treatment he met with, and remember this, all this, was for thy sake, for the Pardon of thy great and many Sins, that otherwise must unavoidably plunge thee into everlasting Perdition. Consider how often thou hast forfeited Life, and all Comforts here, and thy Salvation hereafter, yet boundless Mercy and Patience held the Hands of Justice, and thou hast still thy Life, and Soul, for a Prey. Is not all this, and much more, even all thou hop'st for, preserv'd by the alone Intercession of thy Saviour, whom thou hast often affronted, and long abus'd? If Reflexions on such numberless Favours receiv'd, and

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Provocations pardon'd, won't endear Christ to us, and exalt our Love to God, I know not what can. If Wrath and Danger won't scare us into Duty, yet let our flinty Hearts break upon the soft Lap of Love. Let that Argument prevail upon us, that once did upon a notorious Sinner, who, because *much was forgiven her, loved much*, Luk. 7. 47. The force of this is so cogent to an ingenuous Mind, that in temporal Matters, common Gratitude and good Nature will return Love for Love. If then there be but a spark of Grace in the Heart of a poor Sinner, upon whom Christ has laid infinite Obligations, by making his Peace with God, 'twill certainly burst into a Flame of Love.

XXIV.

If still we need Excitements, let us look down by Thought, into that Gulf of Horror, and inconceivable Torment, where lost Souls live in black despair: Where they desire to die, but Death runs from them. How wretched is that State, where the King of Terrors is courted to do his Office, to befriend them! This sure is Misery beyond the reach of Words,

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or utmost stretch of Thought! Any Place short of this, tho' dismal, must be pleasant to such, who once felt the Horrors of those infernal Shades, were it possible to quit them, and make the Experiment. From this forlorn Dungeon are we drawn up in Hope by the Love of Jesus, who tasted the Wrath of God, that it might not rest on us for ever. 'Tis much to die for a Friend, but nothing short of that Love which is stronger than Death, cou'd move him to die for his Enemies. If any Obligation then can fasten upon us, this must, thus circumstantiated. I press this Argument no farther, because I had rather bring Motives to Love, from the Regions of Bliss above, its proper Center, than from what's quite counter to it, devouring Flames.

XXV.

Turn then thy Eyes to the celestial Orbs, those Worlds of Light, that continually in their Vicissitudes roll over thy Head, to illuminate and refresh Mortals here below, that Earth might not become a Chaos for Darkness and Confusion. If the Suburbs of Heaven are so charming in their Aspect,

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Aspect, and benign Influence, what inconceivable Radiency of transporting Glory shines in the Pallace of the *eternal, immortal, and invisible King* above! The noblest Luminaries, as well as the lesser that bespangle its outward Pavement, accessible to our Views, are of no use there. The Sun itself, the Glory of our Creation, wou'd be out of countenance to shine in the new *Jerusalem* above, where *the Glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.* The conflux of all mortal Light must appear as faint as that of a Glow-worm, compar'd to that effulgence of increate Light. How past Thought happy and glorious are the Inhabitants of this Holy City, whose spiritual Strength, and Capacities, are strengthen'd, and enlarg'd to receive, and bear with the greatest delectation, this *exceeding great, and eternal Weight of Glory.* An infinite number of glorious Objects present themselves to their View, that transport them with wonder, and all this resplendency Points directly to the Lord Jesus, the source and center of Heaven's Glory, who there appears in *his own Glory*, that

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of his Father, and of the Holy Angels. This Vision is all full of Rapture, and extatic sensations: They *see him as he is, for they are like him*, the Sight being transforming. O the incomparable Satisfaction of these blessed Souls, feeling themselves gradually assimilated to the Lord of Life and Glory! They'll wonder how they pass'd the pikes of Time, the Dangers and Difficulties of their Tryals below; how they miss'd the dark Gulf, and got to that happy Abode; but above all, at that singular Love, which conducted them thither!

But why do I venture so far out of my depth, since we all *see* here *darkly thro' a Glass*? The skill of a Seraphim is requir'd to do Justice to this amazing Subject, but then, alas, how little of his Language cou'd we frail Mortals understand? St. Paul caught up into *Paradise*, declares his inability to talk of these Things, so as to accommodate them to our Capacities. He *heard there unspeakable Words, which it's not lawful for a Man to utter*, 2 Cor. 12. 4. ἀἴνετα ἡμῶν. That can't, or must not be utter'd. These feeble Efforts, and faint Sketches, tho' like the babblings

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lings of a Child, or the little Models of Dust, he carelessly rakes together in imitation of a sumptuous Building, yet they may help to lift our Thoughts a little higher than they usually run on this Subject, because too seldom fix'd on its Glories. Certainly if we were assur'd of no more but in the general, of the Excellency, and perpetuity of this exalted State, 'twere enough to blow up all the Passions we were Masters of. Eternal Life is so desirable, that lesser Entertainments, unspeakable beneath what we are promis'd, wou'd reconcile to it, ardent Wishes, if we did but well weigh, and consider it: What Effect then shou'd it have upon us, when Perfection of Bliss is in Conjunction with it? In short, when God himself shall pour into all our Faculties and Powers, as much Joy and Blessedness, as they can crave, or receive?

XXVI.

To make all the foregoing Considerations effectual to promote the Love of God, we shou'd read the Scriptures diligently, to encrease spiritual Knowledge, which will settle and poise our Judgments, so more firmly determine

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our Choices for God, as the All-sufficient Portion of our Souls, and then we shall soon feel a Stream of Affections moving the same way. Such as know God most, love him best. We are exhorted to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Again, *This is Life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* This Knowledge is not meerly speculative, but affectionate, and practical, when saving. Grace grows with Knowledge, and growing in Love, is the most eminent Part of its Growth. Truly to know Christ, his Will and Power to save us, and the need we have of him, is a sure and infallible way to love him. The Knowledge of God, is an Expression, that frequently occurs in Scripture, so does that of the Fear of God, and they are both Terms generally comprehensive of all Religion; but when they are Right, and saving, they ever include the Will and Affections, since very wicked Men may notionally know much of God, and are often forc'd slavishly to fear him, whether they will or not. Our Faith when right, shou'd affectionately embrace

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brace the Truths of the Gospel, then compliance will follow. *Faith comes by hearing* and reading the Word of God: St. Peter's numerous Converts at a Sermon, were the effect of the former, as the *Baraeans* were of the latter. What gives Birth to Faith, encreases it: Such as *receive the sincere Milk of the Word, grow thereby*. Our Saviour, when the Sadduces objected against the Doctrine of the Resurrection, assign'd the Reason, telling them, they *knew not the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*. They lost all true Conceptions of the Will, and Power of God, concerning this Matter, by negligence of this kind.

There's an experimental Knowledge that goes along with the Word of God, that sticks the closest to us, and operates most strongly upon us. An awakening Sense of Sin, the Rebukes of Conscience, some feelings of God's Wrath, with Fears of more, make us know the bitterness of Sin, hate it, fly from it, and dread Hell in the most effectual Manner. This makes us Prize a Redeemer, God's Favour, and a Title to Heaven, in good earnest, not coldly and sceptically, as in the Days

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of

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of our Security ; If then we gain Peace of Conscience, Joy in the Holy Ghost, and hopes of Heaven, how do we Value them, and hug them as our Treasure ? How, in short, are Sentiments, Conclusions, Affections, Course of Life, all chang'd, as if in no Sense we were the same Men. Thus the sanctifying Knowledge of God, gives us a Sense of his Love, and that again begets Love in us to Him, as flame by contact begets flame. *Grace and Peace are multiply'd thro' the Knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 2 Pet. 1. 2.* This is the Wisdom, the wise Man recommends to us, as *the principal Thing*, and exhorts us to get it, *and with all our getting, to get Understanding, Prov. 4. 7.*

XXVII.

In the Prosecution of this grand Affair of our Souls, it behoves us not only to use the proper Means, but to take Care to remove Impediments, especially those that most embarrass us. The Love of God, is the very Essence of the Christian Religion, whatever therefore opposes or endangers it, we must strenuously guard against. Whatever Part we expose, let us be sure to defend our Vitals, and not be so foolish,

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ish, as to expend much of our Care about other Parts, and leave the Head and Heart unarm'd. Light and Love are near of Kin: To know God aright, is to love Him: What therefore eclipses the former, certainly damps the latter. Men of worldly Designs may assert, that Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion, but it's only plain Advice to weak Men, to put out their own Eyes, that cunning Knaves may lead them about upon their own Designs. The Heart cannot be good without Knowledge: For all the Offerings of Love we make, must be a reasonable Service, or they lose their Acceptance. If now our main study be, to gratify our corrupt Inclinations, and gain much of this World, 'twill take off our Thoughts from Pursuits of a better: We shall know little of God, and desire to know less of Him daily, till we drop into an entire Alienation of Affections. I took notice before, that Self-love, and too great a passion for the World, were the grand enemies of Religion, even of the most vital part of it, the Love of God: What I shall add here, shall only be in

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in a few Words, how to get rid
these Incumbrances.

XXVIII.

To begin therefore with what is
nearest us, that we can the least see
or apprehend Danger from, even Self
love. Whoever wou'd compleat a Con-
quest here, must resolve to counter-act
it, in its most prevalent Bent and In-
clinations. It may be there is nothing
more grateful to corrupt Nature, than
Revenge, especially to some Tempers.
Now if we will chastize these furious
Movements, with strong Acts of Self-
denial, not only by restraining the
fierce impetus of its Eruption, into
open Acts of Violence, but endeavour
to repress its glowing within, and pour
on cold water as it were, to put out
the last spark, by Care and Discipline,
we shall find we begin to get a great
piece of Self-conquest. A revengeful
Temper, is most opposite to a Spirit
of Charity, therefore a fit Sacrifice to
be made to that Virtue. He who does
so, will highly please God, and finally
himself, for God will not fail to re-
ward him.

Some

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Some who won't carry their Resentments this Length, are yet of an angry, waspish Disposition, that take Pet, and fire upon slight Occasions. There's a great deal of Self-will and Humour in this blustering Distemper: It ever reposes itself in the Right, and others in the Wrong, tho' the Ground of the Provocation be but imaginary. Pacate Thoughts, serious Reflexions on the weakness, and folly of such Behaviour, great watchfulness, firm Resolutions, by the Grace of God, are the Cure. Take Pains to subdue these turbulent Motions: If you can't eradicate the Temper, yet lop resolutely the spreading Branches.

XXIX.

Mortify a censorious Disposition, a natural, but a very dangerous Part of Self-gratification, that flies directly in the Face of Charity. This busy Concern Abroad, leaves all to run to Ruine at Home. The Pharisee censur'd severely the poor Publican, with a loud Lord I thank thee, yet was but a Hypocrite, the other a Penitent. 'Tis a Pharisaic temper, like the Lapwing, to make a Noise ever farthest from our own Nest. Let us keep Home then,
and

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and look narrowly there. Take heed of the Beam, while criticizing too much on thy Brother's Moat. Even good Men sometimes act scandalously in this Point, as did *David* himself in a sleepy mood, till *Nathan* the Prophet rous'd him, by a home Application, *Thou art the Man*. Let us be cautious then of any sinful Self-indulgences of this kind, for a proud censorious Humour, is next Neighbour to carnal Security and Destruction. I have instanc'd in the ruffling, angry Passions, because they are less taken notice of on these Occasions, but the Discipline is still to be extended farther, to the gay, and softer, to every Thing whereby we are apt to offend.

XXX.

This present evil World, is the other Hindrance of the Love of God. This cou'd not hurt us, were it not in a Conspiracy with the Traitor in our own Bosoms, the sad Remains of Corruption. We are encompass'd with a Scene of Vanity on all Sides, to excite our sensual Inclinations. The God of this World blazons the Beauties of his Temptations, and flashes the Glories of the World in our Eyes,

to

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to gain our Hearts, and make us bow down, and worship his Idol. He had the Impudence to attack our blessed Lord and Master, by an artful Representation of its Charms; but when he came to him, he *found nothing in him* to work upon, as he ever does in us, therefore he sneak'd to him, who scorn'd, and trampled on his Offers; but too often triumphs over us, as his Captives, who basely yield to his Baits, and cowardly submit to his Insults. His temptations usually are reduc'd to three Classes: Riches, Honours, and Pleasures.

XXXI.

Men greedily snap at Money, as a Fund to supply the rest; to *make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*, to command Titles, Homage, and Respect. To cure us of this worldly Itch, God frequently and most pathetically warns us of the Danger, as the great Engine of the Devil, to ruine the Soul. Faith must help us, or the Temptation will be too hard for us, while the Objects of Sense are continual Sollicitors for our Hearts. Faith is the Eye of the Soul, to take a Prospect of a better World, so helps to
poise

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poise us, when we are leaning too much to this. It's the *evidence of Things not seen*, and the *Substance of Things hoped for*, Heb. 11. 1. makes a future State appear real and substantial, while we thus *look at the Things that are not seen*. The habitual Exercise of our Faith is our safety, the suspension o^f it our greatest Danger. We see the Prosperity of the Wicked is but short, and such great ones come to a fearful End. *Son, remember thou hast had all thy good Things*, is a Text that carries a peculiar sting in its Tail, and gives a severer Rebuke to such as fare deliciously, than we imagine at the first Rebound of our Thoughts. May such fair warnings prove as a Hedge of Thorns, to prick and discourage us in our bold Adventures; where we feel the itchy Humour prompt us.

XXXII.

Honours and Titles feed the Vanity of the Proud and Ambitious, tho' near of Kin to airy nothings. They consist of great Names, and Sounds, and depend very much on popular Air, as vain, as uncertain. One wou'd think few shou'd desire to feed long

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on such spare Diet, yet too many are captivated by the gaudy, empty Phantom. Reason shou'd teach us not to idolize such Trifles, but if that can't prevail, Religion must, which forbids the Affectation of them severely. The Pharisees were censur'd by our Lord for affecting *long Robes, Salutations of the Cap or Knee, Greetings in the Market, the uppermost Seats*, and the *Stile of Rabbi*. The Fault lay not in their Garbs, in receiving or paying Civilities, nor strictly in taking the highest Seats, that, upon some Occasions, might be their proper Place; but in that sinful Affectation, that was founded in Pride and Ambition. In the same Sense must that saying of our Saviour be taken: *How can you believe, who receive Honour from Men?* Joh. 5. 41, 44. Compar'd with Ch. 12. 43. A rich Man is not always covetous, nor a Man of Honours and Titles always Proud, tho' these Circumstances may be Accessories, as they are incentives to those Vices, for a poor Man, it's possible, may exceed them both in those vicious Inclinations. May the Sin and Folly of this affectation help
to

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to prick the Bladder of Pride, and turn our Thoughts to higher Acquests, even that Honour that *comes from God.*

XXXIII.

Pleasure is another great Temptation. The gratification of sensual Appetites and carnal Desires are forbidden: To comply with them, denominates us *carnally minded*, a State of *Death*. Notwithstanding this menace, the generality of Mankind are bewitch'd with these Philtres. It highly concerns us therefore to stand on our Guard, and not give way to sinful Indulgences, if we resolve to maintain our Ground. We must avoid all Provocatives, and the first beginnings of Sin carefully, for here lies our main Strength. We must be watchful to cut off sinful Occasions, to look well to the Motions of the Heart, and endeavour to subdue Concupiscence there. We shall find more substantial lasting Pleasures of the Mind by this Self denial, than in all brutish Gratifications. The innocent Delights of Nature, may be us'd sparingly, but the more we spiritualize them, the better, and they become more safe. By

this

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his Means our Pleasures are more redoubled, and redouble upon us. Purity of Mind reflects sweetly on itself, and Spirits more, than dilutes, corporal sensations. *They that are Christ's have crucify'd the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof:* And such as are truly spiritual, will attempt to spiritualize even their lawful Enjoyments, and take part with the *divine Nature* within them.

XXXIV.

When we renounce heartily to Self-love, and become crucified to the World: When our Souls are as a *weaned Child* to Riches, Honours, and Pleasures, then we begin to get into a state of Rest, and advance towards Christian Perfection apace. A worldly spirit receives Life and Vigour from presumptions of long Continuance here, daring Temper often chastised. The *rich Glutton*, who promis'd himself many good morrows, *Goods laid up for many Years*, had a hasty Summons, to quit all *that Night*, as a standing Warning to all Presumptuous Worldlings. When we appear like Pilgrims, and strangers here, when we look upon the World as our Inn, not as our Home,

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Home, are content with Traveller's Fare, with that Honour and respect the common Road affords, being indifferent to Delicacies, and Salutations by the way, having our Minds fix'd upon the Welcome and Entertainments of our Father's House. This is true Christian Deportment, even a holy indifference to our Treatment in our Passage: If better than ordinary to be thankful; if bad, to acquiesce in it, looking still homeward. When Providence blesses us with extraordinary Accommodations, we must eye the Hand that opens to refresh us, gratefully acknowledge it, not churlishly in an affected stoical Fit of Apathy neglect, or depretiate any of his precious Gifts, but liberally impart to our Fellow-Travellers, not incumbering ourselves with needless Luggage to retard our March. If the World dignify and distinguish us, by conferring upon us any Honours, we must not rudely reject its Favours, as knowing we need not turn *Quakers* to become Christians; nor must we so fastidiously dote upon them, as to forget what is better in Reserve. Wise and happy he, who conducts himself with ho-

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vidence in the various Circumstances
Life.

XXXV.

As without the Assistance of the
holy Spirit, we can't mortify Lusts,
conquer the World, nor attain the
true Love of God, so we can't come
to the Assurance of his, to us, with-
out the more immediate influence of
the same blessed Spirit. How earnest-
ly, and constantly then shou'd we pray
for his divine Aids and Comforts,
and without Him, we can't expect
Grace, Peace, or Joy? Our many fail-
ures blot our Evidences for Heaven,
and fill us with Doubts and Fears, un-
less he graciously shine upon them, and
bear up our Integrity. *If any Man
have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of
it, Rom. 8. It's thro' the Spirit, that we
mortify the Deeds of the Body. The Spi-
rit itself bears witness with our Spirits, that
we are the Children of God, Eph. 4. 30.
By him we are seal'd to the Day of Re-
demption, Eph. 1. 14. He is the earnest of
our Inheritance: The earnest of the Spirit
in our Hearts, 2 Cor. 1. 22. These and
many more Expressions to the same
purpose, are of high Importance to
the Being, and Well-being of a Chri-
stian,*

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istian, and may convince us, that no Counsels nor Endeavours of our own will be effectual to these Ends, without his help, and Co-operation.

XXXVI.

Some are fond of Marks of Sincerity, and very inquisitive after them. Others argue strenuously against them, because they are multiply'd too much by many, and strain'd too high, so as to breed Confusion. 'Tis best to follow the Clew of Scripture, notwithstanding Men's Indiscretion, and lose no advantage God gives us, tho' 'twill be our Wisdom to stick close to such as are most evident, and conclusive. Some have too easy Thoughts of coming to a perswasion of the goodness of their State, and have ventured upon this rash Expression, *That it was as easy to attain it, as it was to cast up a Sum.* I wou'd not be uncharitable, yet I hope I may say with less rashness of such a Man, that if some Figures of his Sum were blotted as much as some of his Graces, he wou'd make up a very sorry Account.

XXXVII.

We have seen how the Love of God, Christ, and our Brethren, is the main

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Point of Religion, that this chiefly consists, not in the Float of Affections, but in steady Judgment, Value, and Adherence to God, by strong Acts of the Will. St. Peter's warm Expressions, from sudden starts of Affection, soon cool'd, and left him to a shameful Fall; but after Conviction, and sound Humiliation, the Determinations of his Judgment, and the Resolves of his Will, were so firm, and prevalent, as to carry him courageously thro' all Opposition, and at length thro' all the Terrours of a violent Death. If therefore upon Enquiry, we are so happy as to be able to lay a just Claim to these Marks, they will be instead of all to us, because they are the very Basis of the Christian Religion, without which no saving Attainments are made, and therefore are infallible Signs, if we can find that we possess them, and none will do without them.

XXXVIII.

To begin with the Love of God, and his Christ. Some, I think, are too severe in their Censures of doubting Christians, for tho' they may be a little unreasonable in their Demands, and too

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too troublesome to themselves and others, yet the Errour being on the Right-hand, and it may be, in part unavoidable, from bodily Indisposition, they are more to be pitty'd than censur'd. Therefore, I will not argue at this Rate: " That if a Friend shou'd
 " often be questioning with himself
 " whether he loved me, and express
 " his Doubts frequently concerning
 " his Affection to me, I shou'd indeed myself begin very much to
 " question his Love to me, nay, conclude he had none for me. A very healthy Person may on many Occasions feel a palpitation of his Heart, even from the unequal Movement of his Passions: So may a sound Friend, find sometimes an intermitting Pulse of his Affections, to one he dearly loves, and highly values, thro' many inter-current Accidents. These Vicissitudes depend much on the regularity of the Machine, the Ebbs, and Flows, of the animal Spirits, very uncertain, and out of our Power to command. Sometimes therefore we feel the kindly warmth of Love, and Friendship, expand itself as it were from Head to Foot; at other Times, we find ourselves

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selves benum'd, insomuch that we think we can't say heartily, we love. So hard, if not possible, is it, to maintain an equal Trill of Affection, for these plain Reasons. These then may be called, the aguish Fits of Friendship, rather than its healthful Constitution, that's founded in Judgment and Esteem. To bring the Matter then to the true Test. Is my Friend in apparent Danger, my Concern for him will be felt, and express'd in Proportion to the Love, and Value, I have for him: And the Titillation of my Joys will rise, with his Recovery and Safety. But if the Reverse of all this prove true, in the Day of Trial, all the Questions and Doubts, I put to myself, or him, are impertinent, and hypocritical, and at best can pass only for civil ways of telling him I have no Love for him.

XXXIX.

To apply all this now to the Love of God. This is a Matter of such infinite Consequence, that awaken'd pensivive Spirits, will be under some Doubts, and Fears, and sometimes very perplexing ones. 'Twou'd be extream Folly and Cruelty to ridicule and cen-
E sure

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sure any Expressions they drop to this purpose, meerly because they doubt of their own Sincerity, for thus we shou'd slander the Righteous, and abet the Conduct of confident Fools. 'Tis as difficult to pacify a tender, scrupulous Conscience, as to rouse one that loves to be tickled to Death with Presumption. They are Evils to be avoided, if possible, but we must be very cautious of running out of uneasiness, into extream Danger.

In Distresses of this Nature, it's good to look back, as well as to present Circumstances. Without humiliation we can't expect Mercy. Has God humbled us, and did we truly humble ourselves? The Methods and Degrees of humbling Providences, and of our humbling ourselves, are very various, but the great Question is, what genuine Effects they produc'd? Was Sin im-bitter'd, and Reconciliation to God most desirable? Did the Name of our Saviour sound delicious? Did we close with him, and take up our Rest in God, as our All-sufficient Portion? How stand we affected now to these important Matters? Is Sin still hateful to us, and do we endeavour to avoid

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avoid it, as an impure, contagious Disease of the Soul? Do we repute it our great Enemy, and Fence accordingly against it; and tho' it foil us sometimes, do we rise to the Combat again, and never suffer it to dwell peaceably in us? Do we look on it as our Burthen, Grief, and Misery, and do we still pray, and strive against it? Do we persevere in Duties, tho' they seem to go heavily on, and small Returns to be made? Do we value God's Favour, and pardoning Mercy in Christ above any Thing, tho' at present we feel little or nothing of it? Is the loss, or suspension of it, our greatest trouble, and the Recovery of it our greatest Hope and Desire? Do we so prize these heavenly Favours, as patiently to wait for them, to encounter Difficulties, and abide all Extremities, rather than quit finally our glorious Hopes? In short, do we fear losing God, above any loss whatever, and wou'd the assurance of enjoying him in a better World, be our principal Joy in this. If in the main this be the temper of our Souls, we may safely conclude, we are as clean, as usually Travellers are, who pass thro' a dirty

E. 2 World.

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World: That we truly have the Love of God in us, tho' we have no passionate feelings of it, and therefore may say to Jesus sincerely with *St. Thomas*, tho' not so rapturously, *my Lord, and my God.*

XL.

The transports of the Passions in Joys, or depression of the Soul, by Sorrows for worldly Matters, may make more sensible Impressions, than Objects of a higher Nature, partly by surprize, and partly by those potent Influences, corporeal Things strike upon the Senses, till we rally, and recollect ourselves. This has occasion'd some jealousy in good People, that the World had got their Hearts: But the Concern such shew on this Occasion, unties the Knot, and dissolves the Doubt; since it plainly indicates that better Things lie nearer the Heart, having got full Possession of the Will and Judgment. The swell of the Passions, is like a Spring-Tide, soon up and over-flowing, then soon down again, to low-water; but the latter is like a constant Stream, that runs full, and even. Poor Man is a strange variable Creature, subject to many Vicissitudes

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tudes in this mortal Life, both as to the frame of his Mind, and the Occurrences of his secular Affairs. If then we precipitately judge of Men's States, by some particular Actions, and Seasons, and not by the usual Course and Tenour of their Lives, we may soon so far transpose Things, as to call a good Man, bad, and a bad Man, good. A Saint may halt in the narrow Path, move heavily, and sometimes step out of it, but having a divine magnetic Touch from above, he'll never be easy, till he set his Face again towards Heaven. A bad Man may seem to take some steps in the Path of the just, but his Earthly poise will at length turn him into the broad Way. We shou'd apply this Cautiion, in judging of our own State, not measuring ourselves by Fits and Starts, but by our general Frame and Behaviour, especially by the standing Judgment, and Estimate we have of Things.

XII.

We are bid to *rejoyce, and again rejoyce, to rejoyce evermore. The ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her Paths are Peace. The Joy of the Lord is our Strength, in the Ways of God.* A cheerful Be-

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haviour, the Scriptures repeatedly recommend to Christians, as Ornamental to their Profession. A sour morose Temper fills Men with Prejudices against Religion, as if to be religious, was to be melancholy. No Man on Earth has more reason to rejoyce, than he who has an Interest in God's Favour. No Possessions or Enjoyments are comparable to the assurance of his Love, that Love that makes a Heaven upon Earth. This is the proper Satisfaction of an immortal Spirit: All other Pleasures are beneath it, and so narrow, that they contract it: Here all its Faculties may expand to their full Dimensions, and perfect Repose. But alas, how little of this Blessedness do we taste here, thro' our Faults and Follies? We are too full of the World, to receive divine Consolations. The sacred Unction distils on Souls that desire it earnestly, value and improve it. We complain of Desertions, Declensions, and of spiritual Languors, while our own perverse Conduct necessitates them. God delights not in our Afflictions, nor dark Hours, but desires we may walk in the Sun-shine of his Countenance, but we carelessly stand

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stand in our own Light, then blame him, while we shou'd censure and amend ourselves. Many Cases of this kind proceed from bodily Distemper: Every Object then appears black and dreadful, while the Soul looks thro' such dark mediums, the Body like a sullied Glass being darkened by hypochondriac Impressions. Many other unforeseen Accidents may produce great dejection of Spirit: And there are Hours of Temptation, that God, for wise, and always just reasons, permits, for less, or longer Periods. Now 'twou'd be very wrong, to pass a Judgment of our State, at such Junctures. To infer at this time, a nullity of the spiritual Life, for want of present activity, and pleasant sensations, is, as if a poor Paralytic shou'd argue against his natural Life, because he wants feeling and motion. In these Exigencies, we must have recourse to Self-examination. If we find our troubles spring from careless walking, or any sinful Practices, we must be zealous to repent, and reform. If we can't trace the cause, nor disperse the cloud, we must in the use of proper means wait patiently God's Time. What-

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ever the case be, and however high the Storm run, we have yet this Sheet-anchor of hope, that if we do not renounce God, he will not forsake us : If we still adhere to him, by Judgment and Choice, and will not part with him on any Considerations, we then certainly have an interest in him, and first or last shall know it to our comfort.

XLII.

The other Evidence of our sincerity is the *Love of the Brethren*, and as clear a mark it is, as any in Scripture. St. John labours the Argument throughout his Epistle, and gives us a double Proof of our Integrity, from the Love of God, and of our Brother, that are indicative, nay, demonstrative one of another, both in a positive, and negative Stile : So that if we have one, we have t'other, if not both, neither. This then is a twofold Cord, that is not easily broken. Now the great matter is, to clear up our Right and Title to the glorious Inheritance, by our special Property in these Evidences, that never go asunder.

A. Bp. Lay-
ron. “ Our Love is not thus divided between two Objects, but set in its regular Course,
“ as

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“ as an excellent Author well ex-
“ presses it: First wholly to God, as
“ the sovereign Good, and only for
“ himself, worthy to be loved; and
“ then back from him, it is accord-
“ ing to his own Will, deriv’d down
“ to our Neighbour: For then only
“ we love both ourselves, and others
“ a-right, when we make our Love
“ to him the Reason, and the Rule of
“ both. Our Love is not taken off
“ God, by loving our Brother, but
“ abides still in him, as in its natu-
“ ral Place, as light does in the Sun:
“ It flows forth from him by such an
“ Emanation, as divides it not, as
“ Beams flow forth from the Sun, and
“ enlighten the Air, and yet are not
“ cut off from it. All our Love must
“ first ascend to God, then descend,
“ in what is due, to Men, so passing
“ this way ’tis purified and refin’d,
“ and is subordinate and conform’d to
“ our Love of him, above all, which
“ is the first and great Command.

XLIII.

If then we wou’d not be deceiv’d
in the Application of this Mark to
our own solid Comfort, let us beware
of Self-love, that pestilent Root of
all

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all Mischief and Delusion: It leads the Van to the vilest Crimes: *Men shall be Lovers of their own selves*, 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 4. Then follows the black Catalogue of all that's bad, and unnatural: The Rear then is closed with, *Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God.* 'Tis easy to love ourselves, while we pretend to love our Brother. Thus we may love our own Opinions, and Conceits, our own Ways, Choices, and Humours. If a Christian think as we do, falls in with our Plan, and Schemes, goes to the same Place of Worship, is of the same Sect, Party, or Perswasion, we presently hug, and embrace him. If the Reverse of this happen, or it may be, but in part, tho' he may have many admirable Qualifications to recommend him to our Affections, we receive him with Reserve, look coldly and shily on him, as if nothing cou'd endear the Party to us, but the Sight of our own Face, and Features, in his. In such a Heart we may be sure King-self rules and reigns, and nothing will be thought too good to Sacrifice to the Idol.

If therefore we wou'd brighten this Evidence to our own Consolation, we must over-look all these petty Discriminations, and be careful to love God's Image in our Brother, and not our own. The Beauties of Holiness and Purity must attract our Hearts, these and these only must be the Springs, and Motives, to begin, and carry on Brotherly Love, if we wou'd conclude safely. *If we love not our Brother, thus, whom we have seen, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?* 1 Joh. 4. 19. 'Tis our wisdom then to make the Experiment upon good Men, who differ from us in their Sentiments, about lesser Matters, and are not just of our Perswasion. If then the Piety of their Lives lay hold on our Hearts, and engage our Affections in the main, without other Inducements, we may conclude the Root of the Matter is in us. When I say other Inducements, I mean prevalent ones, for other Considerations may help to engage our Affections to a religious Person, but the more pure the Motives are, with regard to Piety, that actuate our Inclinations of this kind, the more assuredly

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surely may we hope, concerning ourselves. 'Tis good to try how we stand affected likewise to such of our own way and Party, of whom we once had a good Opinion, but now abate of their strictness, and decline in Virtue. Does our value for them, and delight in their Company, rise and fall, as we conceive them to be better or worse? If so, we have another plain Proof on our side.

XLV.

Saints *partake of the divine Nature*, are little Images and Pictures of Christ; so far therefore as they represent the Original, we shou'd be in love with the Copy. If our Love of God, be a Love of Esteem and Value, let our Brother have some of the same in due Proportion. Steady Judgment, and Resolution fortified by Grace, makes the Martyr; and the Scriptures make so high a demand upon us, as to be *ready to lay down our Lives for the Brethren*, 1 Joh. 3. 16. An extemporary, fleeting Float of Passion will not carry us thro' these Difficulties, as may firm Resolves back'd with solid Judgment. Remember St. Peter's warm Fit and Failure. If we
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delight in a Saint's Company in softer Seasons, are we willing to stand by him in suffering Times? Do we share in his Sorrows, and wish him as well, as we do ourselves? Does neither Shame nor Fear prevail upon us, to relinquish his Cause? Here is Danger, to Honour, and Christian Bravery, the proper Tests of Love.

XLVI.

Nothing more obstructs this Charity, than stingy narrow Principles, a Spirit of Bigottry: This soon degenerates into bitter Censoriousness, that finally centers in a spirit of malignancy, without the interposition of divine Grace. These are so many steps of Descent from Charity, into the Abyss of a malicious Spirit. We must take Care of misconstruing Actions, least we take Offence, sow our Spirits, and darken our Evidences, and break the Peace of our Minds. Many precious Proofs, God gives us in Holy Writ, to help us to clear up our Integrity, especially in our Lord's Beatitudes: May he give us Grace for thankful Improvement. Let the weighty saying of the great Apostle sink deep into our Hearts: *And now abid-*
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eth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these, is Charity, 1 Cor. 13. 13. I subjoin a few short Reflexions.

XLVII.

If the Love of God principally consists in what's above represented; and poor Man in his best State here, is frail, and weak; then let no Man be elated with the Sense of his Attainments, nor any weak doubting Spirits despond, while they still retain a high Value for the Favour of God. As true spiritual Proficiency makes the Soul still more humble, so a real, deep Concern about our spiritual Welfare, and Safety, whets our Desires after a Sense of God's Love. Such then who grow giddy, and conceited, under a Presumption of high Attainments, have certainly made little or none; and such who anxiously complain about the Affairs of their Souls, and express Fear and Jealousy, as if they did not prefer the Favour of God, above all Things, may say as truly, that the Hungry and Thirsty value neither Meat nor Drink. I speak of such as are thoroughly inquisitive about the State of their Souls. We must be cautious of transposing Things

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in Grace as well as in Nature, of contradicting clear Evidences, or of denying what we have, only because we han't what we wou'd. 'Tis a common saying, Beggars must not be choosers: We upbraid such as are not contented with their Dole, as unthankful wretches. We are all Beggars to the King of Heaven, and more unworthy of his spiritual Boons, than the poorest Mendicant is of our Alms; we are then vilely ungrateful, unless we acknowledge the Mercies we enjoy. We are too apt, like Children, to think if we cou'd gain such an Eminence, we might touch the Stars; if we cou'd find Heights of Rapture, Joy, and delight in the Ways of God, then we imagine Heaven is as it were within our Reach. Nay, we are so childish, if we reflect upon our querulous Conduct, as to act, as if we valued spiritual suavities, above the Bread of Life itself. Too much of this proceeds from Self-love, that delights to be indulg'd with pleasant Sensations, and won't readily acquiesce in a Child's Portion, tho' dispens'd by a wise Father. St. Thomas wou'd not believe unless he did

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did see, and feel; and we too often immitate him by unreasonable Demands: Is not unbelief secretly lurking at the Bottom of some of them? *Zacharias* was punish'd for his unbelief, express'd by asking a Proof of the Message the Angel brought to him, when he appear'd in the Temple. He knew very well, no Evil Spirit wou'd be permitted to appear in that Holy Place, where God himself vouchsaf'd his own more immediate Presence, therefore his Doubts were more inexcusable, so he was more severely treated. God tells his Saints they are his Temple, that he *dwells and walks in them*, 2 Cor. 6. 16. When He therefore gives them solid Proofs of their Adoption, how dare they cavil, and hesitate, because they han't every Sheep-mark they are fond of, especially such as bring more pleasing Sensations? Why do they teize themselves, as if God wou'd permit a lying Spirit to impose upon them in his Temple, while they are conscious to themselves that they mean honestly, and uprightly?

XLVIII.

Let us learn more fixedly to keep our Eye on Heaven, and the Prospect of that Glory will alleviate the Difficulties of the way. The very hope of that happy Day, will reconcile us to the Hardships of travelling. We shall not then be much concern'd, whether our Passage be by Land, or Water, on Horse-back, or on Foot: If it be boisterous and tempestuous, it may be, we may arrive the sooner; if toilsome and tedious with many a weary, heavy step, still the hope of our happy Home, reconciles us to the fatigue and danger: If we move more easily and pleasantly in our Journey, we don't fall in Love with the Accommodations of the Road, and begin to take up our Rest, but thankfully improve all Helps, for Alacrity and Dispatch, still retaining a longing look towards our Father's House. This sweet Possession of our Souls in Patience, and Contentation, will be the gracious effect, more or less, as we exercise our Faith in looking to the blessed End of it: *Receiving the End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls,* 1 Pet. i. 9. If we savingly close
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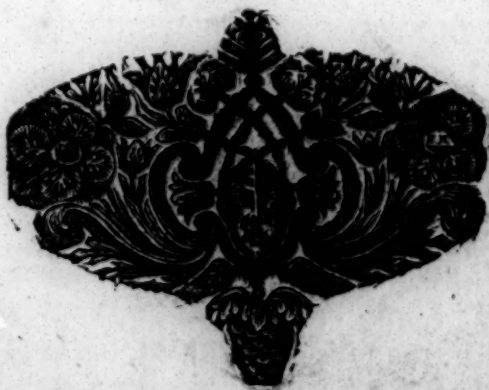
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with Christ, all is safe. If we value him above all, in cool Thoughts, and solidity of Judgment, we have receiv'd him; this Estimation of him, is the genuine effect of saving Faith, let the Means be what they will, that brought us to this happy Choice. Our great Business then is, to resign to the Methods of Providence, in conducting us safely thro' Trials that await us, still keeping our Eye on our Duty, and glorious End. Now if weakneses hang upon us, and embarrass us in the way, if we will still hold on, we shall bring Glory to God, who kept such weak Faith alive, amidst so many Waters to quench it. While Sin and the Heart are at Variance, Sin will not undo us, tho' we may be subject to many Slips and Infirmities, and sometimes to much Dead-heartedness, and Discouragements, for this has been the Fate of many before us, who now are got safe Home. Our great Failures shew what need we have of a Saviour, who *is able to save to the uttermost*, Heb. 7. 25. But the Thoughts, that we have so mighty a Deliverer, so able, and willing to save us, shou'd keep us from be-
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ing dismay'd? Let us then pray, and strive to bring our Minds to this poise, to acquiesce meekly and patiently in any Methods God may take with us, tho' they seem Painful, and very self-denying to Flesh and Blood, provided God may have Glory, and we finally see his great Salvation: To him, and the Lamb, be Glory for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.



Thought on the Lowly
 and despised? Let us then pray, and
 strive to bring our minds to this
 holy, to adore intensely and pray
 daily in any manner God may take
 with us, that they have Faith and
 love, self-denying to Flesh and blood,
 and that God may have Glory, and
 we finally be the great Salvation:
 To him, and the Lamb, be Glory for
 ever. Amen.

